

Representative Holly Raser
Testimony to the Joint Appropriations Committee
January 18, 2007

Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Rep. Holly Raser, HD 98 of Missoula. I am also the mother of an adult child with developmental disabilities.

My daughter Caitlin and I are lucky. Caitlin receives services at Opportunity Resources in Missoula during the day, enabling me to continue teaching first grade.

In addition, through some extraordinary efforts by the people at Opportunity, we were able to find emergency temporary placement for her in a group home so I could attend this session as a member of the House of Representatives.

However as you have heard today, there are many not so lucky. The waiting list for services is long. As representatives, we've heard this when we knock on our constituents' doors. I hear even more when I talk with the parents of Caitlin's friends.

There are two components to the problem of the waiting list:

1. There is not enough funding for the programs themselves.
2. There is not enough funding to pay competitive wages to attract and retain direct care staff.

I appreciate the increase in the Governor's budget to address these concerns, and I urge the committee to further increase funding to the \$30m level requested by DPHHS.

I know there is a tendency of legislators to view agency requests with suspicion. I assure you, these needs are real. I also assure you, the costs of services to address these needs are real as well.

Thank you for your time today and your interests in some of the most vulnerable citizens of our great state.

I would be happy to answer any of your questions at any time.